

Selfridge Field,
Building #1576, (Generator Building) (Old Base Engineering Electric)
South of East Joy Blvd., west of Taxiway C
~~Harrison Township~~, Mt. Clemens Vicinity
Macomb County
Michigan

HAER No. MI-116-VV

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
GREAT LAKES SYSTEMS OFFICE
1709 JACKSON STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102-2571

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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SELFRIDGE FIELD, HAER No. MI-116-VV
BUILDING #1576,(GENERATOR BUILDING)
(Old Base Engineering Electric)

Location: East of Northwest Gate, west of Taxiway C
Selfridge Air National Guard Base
Mt. Clemens vicinity, Macomb County, Michigan
U.S.G.S. Mt. Clemens East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 17.348390.4718650

Significance: Building #1576 is a small functional structure that played a crucial role in providing backup power to a Nike missile battery at Selfridge and is therefore associated with one of the most important assemblages that most directly relates the base's role in national Cold War defense policies.

Description: This building is a single story, concrete block, L-plan structure 25 feet 4 inches by 29 feet wide with a 6 by 14.5 foot unit extending from the west elevation at southwest corner of building. The building rests on a concrete slab and is shielded by a built up shed roof with a wood frieze and soffit. The principal (north) elevation is composed of four bays defined by pairs of four lighted wood entry doors. A steel sash window occurs in the ell of the west elevation and a double steel entry door occurs near the southwest corner of the building. The rear (south) elevation is pierced only by a steel sash window near the southeast corner, and the east elevation displays a steel sash window at the building's northeast corner.

The interior is primarily open space with a 9 by 9 foot office partitioned by masonry walls in the southeast corner of building. Remainder of structure is open work/storage area. A panel board is labeled "Crouse-Hinds explosion proof enclosed panel board for hazardous locations."

History: Building #1576 was erected in 1956 from plans provided by the U.S. Army Air Corps of Engineers. Constructed from standardized plans, this utilitarian structure served as a generator building to provide backup power for Nike operations. After Nike missiles were removed from the base in the early 1970s its components were removed and it served as a storage shed, although it is now

vacant.

Building #1576 is part of the Army Air Defense Command (ADC) Nike district that occupies a distinct complex in the southwestern portion of Selfridge, self contained and isolated from the rest of the base for functional and security reasons. Buildings #1575, #1576, #1578 and #1580 survive from the southwestern Integrated Fire Command (IFC) complex. These buildings functioned as the launching control center for the southwestern Nike batteries at Selfridge (located due south of the IFC in the southwest corner of the base associated with buildings #1572, #1573 and #1594). The IFC was the nerve center to actual launching of the missiles. A typical IFC area was located at a distance from the launcher site it controlled and had a generator building, maintenance and general operational support buildings and crew buildings since the site was operated 24 hours a day.

The 28th Artillery Group (Air Defense), a unit of the ADC under the control of NORAD, set up its headquarters at Selfridge in the southwest portion of the base in 1952. Initially in charge of administering the 90 millimeter gun emplacements for protecting cities such as Detroit, it was later assigned the responsibility of providing combat-ready air defense missile units for defense of the Detroit-Cleveland area and administered Nike missile battalions at Selfridge and others ringing Detroit and Cleveland.

In addition to missiles at Selfridge, the Detroit area firing batteries were located at Utica (Battery A), Carleton (Battery C) and Union Lake (Battery C). Cleveland sites were located near Painesville, Bratenahl, and Fairview Park. These batteries initially used Nike Ajax missiles but later adopted the more advanced Nike Hercules missiles.

In 1969, the Nike missiles were removed from Selfridge and the remaining 28th Artillery Group administrative personnel were moved from the original location in the southwest corner of base to an area adjacent to 661st Radar Squadron. The 28th Artillery Group was deactivated 1974. Selfridge had two Nike installations with two launching sections; at U.S. installations it was more common to have one Nike base with three launching sections or

pits/elevators.

Nike Integrated Fire Control (IFC) and Launcher/ Missile Pits survive relatively intact at Selfridge. The structural components of launcher sites have been removed and the associated missile pits filled in. When these complexes were operational, missiles were stored below ground on either side of a central elevator. The missile pit itself was a large underground room connected to a smaller, adjacent room, called the Firing Panel Operator Room (control room). Hatches on either side of the missile pit lead to the surface and an intercom system connected the control room with surface crews. Each site had a six to eight missile capacity and surface crews would load each missile brought to the surface individually onto the launcher pads. A battery commander at the IFC complex, always located with a clear site line but at a distance from the launcher complex, would launch the missiles. All complexes maintained a backup launch capacity that permitted launching from the Firing Panel Operator Room if the IFC was disabled. A typical launcher complex located within a secured, fenced area, was comprised of a Launcher Control Trailer, communications trailers on concrete pads that would house apparatus to contact the IFC, and the generator buildings or trailers to provide back-up power.

Sources:

Anonymous, Guide and Directory, Selfridge Air Force Base, Selfridge Air Force Base, Michigan, 1960.

_____, History of Selfridge Air Force Base, Michigan, unpublished ms., Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 1967.

Great Lakes Research, Historic American Engineering Record, HAER MI-80, Newport Nike Missile Battery D-57/58. Great Lakes Research, Williamston, Michigan, 1994.

Nigro, Louis, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, An Unofficial History, unpublished ms., Public Information Office, Selfridge ANG Base, Michigan, 1977.

Interview, Colonel Robert Stone (Ret.), Curator, Selfridge Base

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Museum, October 13, 1995.

Interview, Eric Reeve, Selfridge Environmental Management,
October 12, 1995.

Interview, John Rynkowski, Selfridge Environmental Management
(former serviceman at Selfridge during 1960s), October 27, 1995.

Historian:

William E. Rutter
Midwest Environmental Consultants, Inc.
May, 1996